

HON. MARCY KAPTUR
Â OF OHIO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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Ms. KAPTUR. I thank the gentlewoman from California for yielding me this time and wish to say to my colleague from California who just left the podium that one of America's problems in the Middle East is that we have become too identified with the superrich, undemocratic leaders of those countries who ignore the teeming masses of the poor among them. That is where ``the resistance" comes from.

Mr. DREIER. Will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. KAPTUR. As I finish my statement, I will yield some time to the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, today the House will consider another so-called free trade agreement, this time with Oman, a nation that is not a democracy. In fact, far from it. It is a sultanate with rule by the superrich. This agreement will yield no more liberty.

We should defeat the resolution and this bill. Oman is not a free country. Free trade should only exist among free people. Trade should enhance liberty and freedom, not undermine it by enshrining gross privilege.

Exploitation of Oman's working class by its own rulers, along with imported labor from poorer countries who have no rights, underpin the ugly underbelly of Oman, no matter how the gold on their palaces glitters.

Free trade should benefit America and America's workers, so name me a free trade agreement that has done that? The gentleman and I were here for the passage of the horrible NAFTA agreement--he voted yes, I voted no. It has put hundreds of thousands of our people in this country out of work, and it has hurt millions more people in Mexico.

NAFTA has yielded trade deficits with Mexico when we used to have surpluses. Trade deals with Canada, Vietnam, and China have not helped America. Free trade deals help a narrow band of investors this gentleman is more than happy to help.

“Free trade” cannot anchor America's democratic principles. Indeed, trade with an undemocratic society ultimately crushes liberty's cause.

Constitutions dedicated to liberties and rights and justice must come first. Is America so bankrupt and desperate for a landing pad in the Middle East that we cede more of our fundamental values of liberty globally with yet another repressive society?

Free societies exist because people of those nations believed in liberty first. America's trade policy should embody our enduring values of liberty, not enshrine pecuniary relationships without principle.

Oman should first take their place at freedom's table, and then let us talk about free trade.

I ask my colleagues to defeat the rule and to defeat the resolution on free trade with Oman. It is not a free country, and it is time America identified with those in the world who aspire for freedom themselves, not just the superrich.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. *Dreier*).

Mr. DREIER. I thank my friend for yielding. Let me begin by saying I have the utmost respect for my friend from Ohio. I greatly revere her passionate commitment to her goal.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that we share the same goals. Those goals are to improve the quality of life for the middle class and those struggling working Americans here in the United States of America and in other parts of the world. I think that we just have a slightly different view.

You know, the gentlewoman pointed her finger at me and began engaging in very, very strong language about the North American Free Trade Agreement. Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I believe that the North American Free Trade Agreement has been an overwhelming success. Today we enjoy a third of a trillion dollars, with a capital T, in crossborder trade between Mexico and the United States.

As President Bill Clinton said when he was eulogizing Lloyd Bentsen, the former Treasury Secretary and Senator from Texas, he said, were it not for the North American Free Trade Agreement, this very serious problem that we have of illegal immigration would be much, much worse today than it is.

Now, if one realizes that in Mexico we have a burgeoning middle class, a middle class that is today larger than the entire Canadian population, and it is continuing to grow, those areas that have benefited most greatly from the North American Free Trade Agreement in the northern states of Mexico have seen tremendous booms in their standard of living.

Ms. KAPTUR. Would the gentleman be happy to yield me a couple of seconds on his time?

Mr. DREIER. I am happy to yield to my friend.

MS. KAPTUR. You know, it is amazing how two people can live in this world and view it so differently. The exploitation of Mexico's rural countryside is a continental sacrilege. The reason we have all this illegal immigration to our country is NAFTA wiped out the struggling poor of Mexico's countryside. Does the gentleman have no conscience for them?

Mr. DREIER. If I could reclaim my time, Mr. Speaker. May I reclaim my time?

Ms. KAPTUR. What about our workers? Millions lost jobs because of NAFTA.

Mr. DREIER. Could I reclaim my time, Mr. Speaker? Am I in control of my time?

She is claiming that I am somehow exploiting the underclass of Mexico.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 additional minute to the gentleman.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. *Kolbe*). The gentleman is recognized for 1 additional minute.

Mr. DREIER. I would say to my friend, obviously we want to do everything that we can to see the standard of living and quality of life for that underclass that she refers to, as she leaves the floor, as I am trying to engage in this colloquy with her.

I will say that I believe that our policies have played a big role in enhancing the standard of living and quality of life, and I am not going to be satisfied until every single one of those individuals does, in fact, see their quality of life improve.

I believe in that economic liberalization and creating economic opportunity, which we have done for so much of Mexico, through the existence of the----

Ms. KAPTUR. Would you be kind enough to yield?

Mr. DREIER. I am happy to yield.

Ms. KAPTUR. I will just say to the gentleman that post-NAFTA, the wages of Mexicans were cut in half. Two million people are streaming across this continent because their way of life has been destroyed. Travel with me to meet these people. In our Nation, the middle class has lost a million jobs to Mexico. Why is it the gentleman refuses to see this continental tragedy.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, that is just plain wrong. That is just plain inaccurate. If you look at, again, the standard of living and quality of life in Mexico, it is substantially greater today than it was before the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Ms. KAPTUR. Not for the ordinary people.

Mr. DREIER. I believe that these policies are very important for the United States and the world.

Ms. KAPTUR. Only for those at the top.